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Gun Seller Charged with Theft of Sales Tax

OLYMPIA, Wash., Oct. 1, 2003—The State of Washington today charged a Bremerton firearms dealer with two counts of felony theft of sales taxes on guns he sold at gun shows throughout the Pacific Northwest in 2000 and 2001.

The state charges are in addition to federal firearms violations charges filed previously against Eric Robert Barnes, 43, an enlisted U.S. Navy officer who has operated E&L Enterprises from his home in Bremerton since 1990.

The Washington State Attorney General's Office filed the theft charges against Barnes in Kitsap County Superior Court in cooperation with the Kitsap County Prosecuting Attorney. The charges were brought at the request of the Washington State Department of Revenue. The state charges carry a maximum penalty of ten years in prison and a \$20,000 fine.

Retailers are required under state law to collect and remit sales tax, but filing papers allege that Barnes failed to report nearly \$20,000 in sales tax he collected on \$344,000 in gun sales between 1995 and 2001. The charges cover the amounts he allegedly stole in 2000 and 2001. Barnes filed tax returns from 1990 through 1993, but failed to file returns between 1994 and 2001 despite continuing to do business, according to charging papers.

Last week, a grand jury returned a 179-count federal indictment against Barnes charging him with failing to keep and maintain certain records of firearms transactions and follow certain procedures under the Brady Bill. Those charges are being announced today. For more information, contact Jeff Sullivan at the U.S. Attorney's Office, (206) 553-2618.

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